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The Journey to Sustainability for Selected CSOs in Ghana: Experiences, Milestones, Challenges, and Lessons Learnt



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- To raise awareness on key issues in West Africa;
- To generate debates and discussions on these issues;
- To proffer recommendations on civil society involvement in advocacy;
- To provide recommendations to policy makers.



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFM:	Alternative Funding Model
CCLD:	Centre for Community Livelihood Development
CSO:	Civil Society Organisations
CSSI:	Civil Society Sustainability Index
IDEG:	Institute for Democratic Governance
MANGO:	The Management Accounting for Non-Governmental Organisations
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisations
WACSI:	West Africa Civil Society Institute



ABSTRACT

The context for civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Global South – delegitimising discourse, restrictive policies, and decreasing international funding – leads to major concerns about the sustainability of civil society (Susan and Daniel, 2017). In West Africa, even though CSOs have significantly contributed to governance and social development, most are still fragile and dependent on donor funding mechanisms for survival (Elongué and Vandyck, 2019). Also, CSOs are under immense pressure to operate, survive and thrive in an increasingly competitive sector (Arhin et al., 2018). The overall picture of civil society's sustainability appears worrying and challenging.

As a response to these challenges, civil society actors began discussions on issues related to the sustainability of the sector to find lasting solutions (Hailey and Salway, 2016). In Ghana, the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) partnered with Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness (STAR) Ghana in 2015 to explore the scope of the problem from which a research was published on the [state of CSOs sustainability in Ghana](#). In 2019, a [National Civil Society Sustainability Strategy](#) was developed. It contains eight recommendations, one of which urges Ghanaian CSOs to reengineer their business models to become more viable and sustainable.

This paper documents and analyses the trajectory, challenges and lessons learnt by these CSOs in their effort to become sustainable. It explores the degree of relevance of four CSO sustainability convenings and three sustainability workshops which supported 106 CSOs and 56 CSOs respectively to reflect on appropriate strategies to increase their resilience and sustained impact. Its three

sections contain solutions to the practical challenges related to civil society sustainability in Ghana; theoretical and practical lessons learnt.

The first section focuses on the challenges faced by civil society in a bid to remain sustainable. It explains how Ghana's graduation to middle-income status resulted in donors curtailing some aid programmes in Ghana. Another challenge is the shrinking civic space with the poor regulatory, legal and environmental frameworks that limit the effective operations of CSOs. The second section focuses on the sustainability journey of CSOs in Ghana. It presents the key milestones and highlights many other aspects to sustainability, not just the financial dimension but also the identity, interventions, and operational sustainability. The third section presents valuable experiences and lessons on how organisations are responding to their sustainability challenges.

This paper has two main objectives: to document and share civil society's challenges and progress towards sustainability as well as effectively use the evidence to shape the discourse on CSO sustainability in Ghana and West Africa. It is therefore important for development stakeholders in the Global North and South because it presents evidence that strongly reflects issues on the ground that would challenge preconceptions, while still maintaining a relevance to public policy and practice. It offers a broad understanding of civil society sustainability, exploring why this issue matters in the present geopolitical context, reviewing what has changed from previous analyses, and proposing ideas for what needs to change as we move forward.



Introduction

Civil society, together with government and the private sector, constitute an essential pillar of a well-functioning state. Civil society across the globe has emerged as a key stakeholder in the development process and a vital force in strengthening governance processes. In West Africa, civil society continues to grow and evolve. The sector's contribution to democratic development and consolidation has been significant (Atuguba 2013). In Ghana, the Commonwealth estimates that "there are around 300,000 NGOs", with an estimated annual development expenditure of \$150-200 million.¹

Atuguba (2013) highlights some of civil society's specific contributions as: (1) Initiating policies which are approved by Cabinet and passed into law by the Parliament; (2) Holding public officers accountable for the use of public resources; (3) Performing a critical role in mobilising social capital for development activities; (4) Articulating citizens' interests and demands and defending citizens' rights; (5) Advocating for the equitable distribution of national resources; (6) Mediating between the State and citizen groups on contentious issues; (7) Nurturing peace and security; and (8) Providing goods and services to mostly unreached segments of the population amongst others.²

Although civil society plays a key role in contributing to the development of Ghana, dwindling funding, inadequate staff capacity, absence of enabling legislation to catalyse the work of civil society actors are some of the key challenges that are plaguing the sector in the country. Civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ghana are generally fragile and dependent on donor funding mechanisms for survival. CSOs in Ghana are under immense pressure to operate, survive and thrive in an increasingly competitive sector, while maintaining independence and continually generating funds to pursue planned operations and command strong recognition and influence.

The goal of this piece is therefore, to explore the process undertaken by various development partners and other local stakeholders to strengthen the sustainability of the civil society sector in Ghana. The data which constituted the foundation of our analysis has been collected through a survey aimed at understanding the sustainability challenges of selected CSOs that participated in a series of national convenings on CSOs sustainability.

These challenges have been grouped under the four dimensions of CSOs sustainability: identity, interventions, operational and financial. The last section of this paper, *"My Sustainability Journey"*, is a series of publications by CSOs that have benefited from the sustainability capacity development programme. They shared their experiences, successes, challenges to inspire other CSOs in the country and beyond.

1. Exploring the Concept of Civil Society Sustainability

According to Charles Kojo Vandyck (2017), civil society sustainability is the "capacity and capability of [CSOs] to continuously respond to national and international public policy variations, governance deficits, legal and regulatory policies through coherent and deliberate strategies of mobilising and effectively utilising diversified resources, strengthening operations and leadership, promoting transparency and accountability, and fostering the scalability and replicability of initiatives and interventions". Hence, sustainable CSOs are those able to "respond strategically and effectively to external changes. They revise their mission and objectives accordingly, access new sources of income, and adapt their systems and processes to meet the new challenges³".



¹ Opinion: Are Civil Right Societies or NGO essential to Ghana's development? Culled from www.myjoyonline.com

² Atuguba, R. (2013) Civil Society and Development in West Africa: Ghana Civil Society Paper. 28 February 2013

³ INTRAC Briefing Paper 41. Models of INGO Sustainability: Balancing Restricted and Unrestricted Funding. John Hailey. November 2014



In this regard, MANGO an NGO whose mission is to strengthen the financial management and accountability of NGOs, indicates that CSOs need to invest in building relationships (operational sustainability), risk management and good financial practice (financial sustainability). Ashoka adds that the ability of a CSO to manage change and remain sustainable depends on, first, having a sufficient and positive public profile (identity sustainability), having a network and reputation to attract resources (intervention sustainability), having suitable and appropriate organisational systems and processes to be able to attract resources and retain a relationship with the donor or those making the contribution (financial sustainability), having the internal capacity and willingness to learn and evolve (operational sustainability).

The International NGO Training and Resource Center (INTRAC) considers and simplifies the above particularities by describing a sustainable CSO as one that can continue to fulfil its mission over time and, in doing so, meet the needs of its key stakeholders – particularly its beneficiaries and supporters⁴. As such, sustainability is an ongoing process, rather than an end in itself. It is a process that involves the interaction between different strategic, organisational, programmatic, social, and financial elements. MANGO, Ashoka, INTRAC and WACSI all point out that civil society sustainability is not just about developing new fundraising campaigns or writing clever funding proposals, but as much about ensuring that there has been sufficient investment in organisational systems and processes.



⁴ INTRAC is a not-for-profit providing training, consultancy, and research globally to help civil society organisations and networks be more effective.

Over the years, new methodologies and tools, such as the WACSI's civil society sustainability index (CSSI), have been developed to identify and assess the organisational characteristics of effective and sustainable civil society organisations. During a study on [The State of Civil Society Organisations' Sustainability in Ghana](#) (WACSI, 2015), the CSSI was used to assess various dimensions of sustainability: financial (the continuous availability of financial resources), operational (capacity, technical resources and administrative structures to operate programmes), identity (the long-term existence of organisations themselves) and in relation to interventions (the continuity of results, impacts of specific projects after its completion or funding ends⁵).

The assessment found that CSOs in Ghana are facing a challenging situation with their operational sustainability, with an average index of 2.6⁶, which depicts a challenging and less-than-satisfactory state for civil society to continue their operations.

Affirming this, Peter Abugri, Executive Director of NEEDnet pointed out during one of the civil society sustainability convenings that; "we need the capacity to build systems that will keep the organisation effective to make impact".

The assessment also revealed the difficulty for several CSOs to secure sufficient funding to continue to execute their programmes in the changing development landscape. Indeed, finance came out as the most pressing and challenging aspect of sustainability, yielding an average index of 2.4 on the CSSI. Averagely "income mobilisation and generation received a very challenging score (score=2.3), financial planning was even more challenging (score=2) while sound financial management systems received a satisfactorily score (score=3)" (WACSI, 2015). Looking at these scores, we may understand why many CSO leaders consider financial sustainability to be the key panacea to their sustainability woes.

[A STAR-Ghana Political Economy Analysis of Civil Society in Ghana](#) (2013) regarding the perceptions of CSOs about their financial situation, further demonstrated that "47.2% of CSOs in the study considered that their financial situation had improved over the last five years,

⁵ West Africa Civil Society Institute. The State of Civil Society Sustainability in Ghana.

⁶ By assigning scores against the four dimensions of sustainability, the 15 criteria and 51 specific indicative questions, we worked out the Civil Society Sustainable Index (CSSI), demonstrating the overall picture of the context in which CS and CSOs are operating. The series of questions and computation were assessed against four (4) response alternatives or scales: (1) Not sustainable (2) Challengeably Sustainable (3) Satisfactorily sustainable and (4) Strongly sustainable. Respondents from each organisation scored the 51 indicative questions from 1 to 4 on the basis of their own reflections, experiences and judgment. The average score for each dimension of sustainability was calculated by aggregating all the responses. The final composite score which represents the overall state of sustainability is therefore an aggregation of all the four dimensions. See: WACSI (2015). The State of Civil Society Sustainability in Ghana. P. 11-12



32% thought their situation had deteriorated while 20.8% thought their situation had remained the same. Regarding how CSOs viewed their financial sustainability, only 6.9% of the CSOs rated their organisations as 'permanently sustainable' whilst 24.1% viewed their organisations as having 'prospects for long term' and 21.4% considered their organisations to have 'medium term' sustainability. A few rated themselves as having 'prospects for short term sustainability' (13.8%) and 'living from hand to mouth' (12.1%).⁷

CSOs in Ghana are generally in a state where the likelihood of beneficiaries continuing programmes and projects after donors' exit looks less than satisfactory, hence, a low sustainability of projects. Overall, the picture of sustainability of civil society in Ghana appears challenging and requires immediate action to ensure positive outcomes in the future. But through this paper we explored how this perception of sustainability by CSOs in Ghana has gradually shifted, essentially after attending a series of capacity building interventions and programmes on civil society sustainability.

Moreover, since the above scores on CSOs sustainability are from a national assessment conducted in 2014-2015, this paper also provides an updated insight on the current (2020) existential challenges that local CSOs are encountering. The sections that follow will explore the pathways and milestones CSOs have engaged in to become sustainable, the challenges that are particular to the environment of CSOs in Ghana, describe how selected CSOs have overcome those roadblocks, the lessons learned in the process and recommendations to further build the resilience of CSOs in Ghana.

⁷ STAR-Ghana. Political Economy Analysis (PEA) of Civil Society in Ghana. November 2013

2. Key Milestones to Civil Society Sustainability in Ghana



In October 2013, STAR-Ghana organised a Civil Society Learning Forum (CSLF) with the intention to cross learn and share their practices in supporting outcomes in citizen empowerment and government accountability and responsiveness, building on the Pan African Civil Society Learning Event (PACSLE) held in Kenya in June 2012. CSLF built on PACSLE's progress in bringing together largely DFID funded programmes in Africa.

In November 2014, WACSI partnered with STAR-Ghana to commission a research on “The State of Civil Society Organisations’ Sustainability in Ghana”. Published in 2015, the publication revealed that several CSOs are just surviving and struggling to thrive; it threw light on how CSOs in Ghana are grappling with profound questions about their future, purpose and role in socio-economic development. The research generated huge interest and stimulated nationwide discourse with regards to the way forward.

CSOs and development partners alike considered ways through which they can support CSOs to be sustainable and capable of creating a durable impact in the country. The study also brought to the fore the 4 dimensions of sustainability (operational, identity, interventions and financial) which were further developed in the civil society sustainability index and the national strategy for civil society sustainability.

In November 2015, WACSI in association with INTRAC organised a workshop involving representatives of 41 international NGOs and agencies, national and regional organisations, foundations and donor agencies to discuss aid dynamics and changing global power relations which is having a great effect on civil society organisations around the world. In the process, wider issues related to regulatory, legal, and environmental frameworks that enable the effective operations of CSOs became an important aspect of the sustainability discourse.

Building on the research, in 2018, WACSI and Star-Ghana consulted CSOs in Ghana to assess their roles and actions to remain sustainable within the rapidly changing development context through gathering evidence and learning about the state of the sector’s sustainability as well as influencing civil society policy and funding mechanisms. Four convenings were held across the country, which brought together some 106 CSOs from all regions of Ghana namely:

- Coastal belt Convening of CSOs in Central and Western Regions.
- Middle belt Convening of CSOs in Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo Regions.
- Southern zone Convening of CSOs in Eastern, Greater Accra and Volta Regions.
- Northern zone Convening of CSOs in Northern Ghana (Upper East, Upper West, and Northern Regions).

These convenings generated concrete actions that would contribute to the sector’s long-term survival and continued impact. These actions provided key information that was used in the development of the [National Civil Society Sustainability Strategy](#) for Ghana.

In 2019, three subsequent national sustainability workshops were held in the Northern, Middle, and Southern belts of Ghana to support some 56 CSOs develop and operationalise feasible sustainability strategies for their organisations. Among others, participants recommended that there should be a national civil society platform (or network of non-governmental organisations) to guide, support and help coordinate operations within the sector. National civil society strategy Launched in October 2019, this strategy is a resourceful toolbox of ideas, initiatives, and strategies for making Ghanaian civil society viable and sustainable.

The overriding message that came out from the strategy was that there is the pressing need for CSOs to re-think their business models, think strategically about their financial models and adopt strategies that will help them maintain their independence. The strategy suggests a mix of 41 administrative and strategic policies, strategies, plans, forms, and manuals that a viable CSO should have.

From the National Civil Society Sustainability Strategy, it was recommended that STAR-Ghana could partner with WACSI to test the ideas and strategies in this plan by assisting CSO networks or high-performing CSOs to operationalise this plan on a pilot basis. These CSO networks will serve as “centers of excellence” and will cascade their learning and support through national, regional and district CSOs and networks.

The launch of the strategy had been made possible with support from STAR Ghana Foundation to organise a 3-day sustainability fellowship from Wednesday 9 October to Friday 11 October 2019, for 20 civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ghana to stimulate them to take practical steps to define financial sustainability strategies and identify key actions to be implemented that would promote their resilience and long-term existence as credible development actors. This will ensure that CSOs are in tandem with the sustainability agenda, hence, enabling a core group of grassroot organisations to speak with a stronger and more unified voice. WACSI provided follow-on support to the organisations through virtual mentoring and coaching to strengthen a specific dimension of their sustainability actions.



3. Challenges to Sustainability Experienced by CSOs in Ghana

3.1 Challenges related to identity sustainability

"Seek ye first, identity, operational and intervention sustainability, and financial sustainability will follow". - Charles Kojo Vandyck, WACSI

i. Lack of adequate policies to establish and consolidate the organisation's identity

Many CSOs are simply not sustainable because their identity is not clearly established or understood by its internal or external constituents. A weak perception of the organisational identity would influence the organisation's sustainability. If organisations are not aware of what a healthy organisation looks like, it would be more difficult for them to become one. It is more effective to find a solution to a challenge when the root cause has been properly diagnosed and identified. Hence, if organisations unconsciously (or even consciously) fail to identify the root cause of the problem, it will be more difficult to effectively address it.

Clarifying and understanding the organisational identity is a key step towards sustainability. This process would require clearly determining the unique strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) that are particular to the organisational nature and environment

of interventions. This understanding will finally reflect in the organisation's strategic vision and planning. As Josue Tchimu, executive director from SMAid rightly put it:

"Even though, we learnt about the 4 pillars of organisational sustainability: identity, operational, intervention and financial. We learnt that once the identity is strong, the operational, intervention, and financial will surely follow. Our motto during the workshop was: 'Seek ye first, identity; operational and intervention, and financial [sustainability] will follow'. That is true because we are currently piloting and enjoying the implementation of this motto."

To consolidate the organisation's identity, and avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation, it is important to develop policies to better inform staff on how to best implement the sustainability plan to achieve defined targets. Policies also ensure that funds raised by the organisation are well managed. Some policies that were identified as relevant by CSOs from the national sustainability convenings include a reserves policy, staff reward policy, an institutional rate card, a staff development policy, and a cost recovery policy. Ezekiel Boampong of Street Children Project in the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi, Ghana explained that after his organisation developed a sustainability strategy, they identified the need to put in place policies that would enable them to achieve defined goals.

"We put in place a procurement policy in the third quarter of 2019. Implementing this has saved us 16% of the procurement budget", Ezekiel explained.

Samuel Appiah of the West Africa Civil Society Institute and facilitator at the Civil Society Sustainability Fellowship emphasises that, "all organisations need a series of policies and procedures to guide operations, avoid misunderstandings and encourage consistency".

ii. Poor planning

Consistent organisational growth is the fruit of a carefully elaborated plan with goals and methods to achieve a specific outcome. A CSO cannot become sustainable by accident; without setting up a plan that sets out the objectives, strategies, activities, timelines, and the staff responsible for specific deliverables. That plan should also lay out how the process will be assessed and ameliorated. As Wedad Sayibu, a beneficiary of this programme underscores, a plan will enable an organisation to "have



details of where you are and where you want to go and how to stay where you want to be". Failing to plan is simply planning to fail. A clear understanding of the organisational identity combined with effective planning will enable an organisation to stay focused, better organised and judiciously utilise its scarce resources.

(See Annex 1 for a sample of an organisational sustainability plan on page 23)

3.2 Challenges related to operational sustainability

At the level of operational sustainability, CSOs in Ghana are experiencing challenges at the level of:

- Staff capacity: Some CSOs are not financially able to hire or maintain competent and highly skilled staff to conduct their activities; coupled with donor disinterest in paying for staff cost. Others CSOs are rather having high staff numbers (mostly volunteers) and are unable to efficiently manage them.
- High staff attrition and the difficulty in managing transitions and project closures.
- Weak governance systems.

Having the requisite capacity is essential in enabling the organisation to achieve the results laid down in their sustainability plan. It is therefore important for CSOs to assess the skills set available in the team. If inadequate, the organisation should define steps to capacitate the team to acquire the right competencies needed to deliver on the plan.

To realise this, it is important to motivate and support staff to regularly take refresher courses online, by reading or in face-to-face classes to upgrade their skills.

To enhance its staff motivation and capacity and help them develop a sustainability mindset, Street Children Project, a faith-based organisation from the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi, organised a step-down training on organisational sustainability to the management team and subsequently to all staff. They also set up their staff room to a professional standard, assigned more leading roles to junior staff and increased number of staff meetings from a monthly schedule to a weekly frequency.

Abundant Grace Female Foundation (AGFF) has also put measures in place to improve staff capacity for optimal performance.

"Our staff members have undergone different capacity building initiatives like workshops and orientation meetings for them to better understand the new policies developed. AGFF hired new workers and volunteers and also adopted motivation schemes like birthday party for staff and staff welfare schemes for our workers and volunteers to motivate them more and create a sense of belonging in the workplace"

indicated by Grace Commey, the Executive Director of AGFF, after participating in the fellowship on CSOs sustainability.



3.3 Challenges related to interventions sustainability

Some CSOs find it challenging to adapt to the ever-changing aid environment and the shift in focus of support from donors. Also, most CSOs do not sufficiently leverage on the potentials of their immediate stakeholders to continue to be relevant and to ensure that they are sustainable. At the regional sustainability convening in Takoradi, Mr. Michael Ohene Effah, a facilitator of the workshop indicated that the trend of donor funding in the civil society space has changed. He recommended that the over 30 CSOs start or continue developing business mindsets and strategies in their interventions to guarantee their sustainability.

All the sustainability convenings also revealed that the interventions of Ghanaian CSOs have been greatly impacted in various ways by the changing national, regional and continental trends, amongst which are:

- Collapse of some strong CSOs.
- Focus on short term projects.
- Increase in membership of associations.
- Establishment of social enterprises.
- Inability to expand scope of activities.
- Loss of independence and credibility due to the reliance on politicians. Some organisations shared stories of hostility of political appointees towards their work, especially in the regions and districts.
- Ineffectiveness of the NGO Bill which is not appropriately addressing the priorities and needs of the non-profit sector.

In this regard, Kweku Boateng the executive Director of 4H Ghana⁸, indicated that: "other CSOs promoting the civil society agenda must make sure that capacity building for sustainability becomes a key component of the NGO bill. And government must recognise the role of CSOs as major partner in development and move quickly to pass the NGO bill."

As Richmond Agbanyaklu, the Executive Director of Evangor Foundation⁹, acknowledged, "before the sustainability programme, and with all the dimensions of sustainability be it identity, intervention, financial and operational, Evangor Foundation was woefully 'malnourished'".

4.4 Challenges related to financial sustainability

Some CSOs in Ghana do not have sound financial management systems. Financial management entails planning, organising, controlling and monitoring the financial resources of an organisation to achieve objectives. If an organisation has limited resources, financial management is a pivotal action that needs to be taken to ensure that the scarce resources are managed in a way that will enable the organisation to prepare for rainy days, and beyond that, attain financial self-sufficiency.

Even though financial sustainability is key, it is not enough. From a 2019 survey conducted for 20 CSOs who applied for the civil society sustainability fellowship, 57% of them believe that if challenges hampering their financial sustainability are addressed, they will become wholly sustainable. This belief has gradually changed for CSOs that participated in the sustainability convenings:

"By the end of the Takoradi convening, it became imperative for me to have a total paradigm shift of perspectives. The importance and the swiftness of that shift can never be over emphasised if only I want my organisation [Evangor Foundation] to be counted among those who have survived maybe after the next 30 years. I now have a total change of mindset as to the concept of sustainability of CSOs, especially in Ghana. I am now aware of the various forms that sustainability can take in Evangor Foundation,"

declared Richmond Agbanyaklu, Executive Director of Evangor Foundation.

⁸ 4-H is a Positive Youth Development Organisation that empowers young people with the skills needed to solve problems in their communities in Ghana.

⁹ Evangor Foundation was among the organisations selected to be part of the sustainability workshop in Kumasi.



As previously discussed, becoming financially self-sufficient is not the result of ad hoc actions, but the outcome of a process with a clear vision and plan for resource mobilisation. The Agriculture-Environmental and Infrastructure Development Foundation (AGRIDEF), a community-based organisation (CBO) that participated in the sustainability convenings confirms this:

“AGRIDEF never thought of doing anything like domestic fundraising and all our proposals were sent to foreign donors. We thought fundraising activity was more effective outside the country than within, but after the training workshop, we commenced fundraising activities in the constituency”,

stated Desire Aggor the Executive director of the organisation.

He later added:

“We did not know anything about the four pillars of organisation sustainability: identity, operations, finances and interventions. WACSI was able to expose us to these pillars and we are also working with it. When applied the operational, intervention and identity sustainability strategies helped to make AGRIDEF more visible in our constituency. Now, things have changed: domestic fundraising activities have kicked off, a new functional board has been established to give direction and stakeholders know more about the existence and relevance of the AGRIDEF”.

Weak capacity to manage large funds and low competitiveness in sourcing grants are other challenges related to financial sustainability that have been experienced by Ghanaian CSOs.

In general, the journey to sustainability starts with a change in mindset about sustainability itself. Once that mindset is adopted, it will then be important to develop a plan, acquire the requisite capacity, develop relevant policies and procedures, establish strategic partnerships, communicate meaningfully, and manage the resources judiciously.



4. Case Studies on the Sustainability Journey of Selected CSOs in Ghana

This section chronicles the experiences of selected organisations as they actively engaged in the process, the gains they accrued and or hurdles they experienced. The case studies have been documented by the respective organisations as they seek to enable other like-minded organisations to learn from them.

4.1 4H Ghana by Kweku Boateng

“We encourage all CSOs to sign unto the WACSI CSOs e-directory and embark on the sustainability journey.”, - Executive Director of 4H Ghana, Mr. Kweku Boateng.

i. Before the sustainability fellowship

4-H Ghana was established in 2000 to guide young people to reach their full potential through positive youth development programming. Since the inception, the organisation has been striving to uniquely position itself as a specialised youth development service provider through the many programmes run by the organisation. As a result, the need to enhance visibility through a specialised programme that would attract a broader investment has become more urgent than ever.



4-H Ghana nominated its programmes director to participate in WACSI's sustainability workshops in Koforidua and Accra, to help 4-H to develop and implement a strategy to enhance its efforts and capacity towards achieving overall organisational sustainability.

ii. During the change process

In our sustainability journey, the initial challenge was the difficulty to get the sustainability vision shared among every member of the organisation. Continuous education and individual engagement of each member of staff through general and management meetings proved very effective to get everyone involved in the planning and implementation processes. The workshop improved understanding of sustainability from 4 dimensions - identity, operations, interventions and financial – and provided resources and tools for sustainability action planning.

After the workshop, a general meeting was held with the entire staff of 4-H to educate and equip them with the resources and tools for sustainability action planning. The purpose of this meeting was to create a shared vision among staff concerning the sustainability of the organisation. Technical review meetings were held with the management team after the general meeting to review the organisation's programmes and strategy. The team identified the need to specialise 4-H programmes by aligning all programmes objectives with the overall strategic goal. Identity sustainability became the topmost priority of 4-H based on the 4 dimensions of sustainability. The team developed a 6-month action plan to enhance the visibility of the organisation, to increase partnership, collaboration and investment in 4-H's specialised youth development programmes.

iii. The results

The actions implemented resulted in:

- The development of new partnerships with the Koforidua Technical University (KTU), the Crop Research Institute of Ghana's Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa (YIIFSWA) project and collaborations with the University of Ghana Food Science Department and the Internal Potato Center (CIP) in Ghana.
- The review of the organisation's mission and vision, communications and marketing plan to project youth development as a 4-H specialised programme to improve food security, health, governance and citizenship.

- The reviewing of internal reporting tools to make sure that it captures all the programmes results that contributes to the achievement of the overall organisational goal.
- The establishment of a Youth Agriculture Enterprise Farm to train young farmers and generate revenue to support the organisation's operations. The farm centre is gradually developing into a hub of agriculture enterprise for the youth.

4.2 Ark Development Organisation by Emmanuel Kwafo Mintah

"The WACSI sustainability programme with support from STAR Ghana Foundation sparked hope into our organisation and we know, though we have started flying, our wings will surely get stronger."

i. Before the sustainability fellowship

Before the sustainability fellowship, the Ark Development Organisation was faced with: weak funding base, non-usage of management software and database, limited investment in staff capacity and institutional infrastructure, inadequate operationalisation of the organisation's human resource (HR) policy, inadequate tracking of organisational strategic plan indicators, absence of succession plan, low capacity of the board, poor communications demonstrated by the lack of a communication/media strategy, inadequate stakeholder ownership of projects, low spirit of volunteerism, and weak partnerships among others.

The West Africa Civil Society (WACSI)'s programme on sustainability for civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ghana enlightened us on future possibilities.

ii. During the change process

Our sustainability journey started with an in-depth transformation towards a more responsible and sustainable organisation. We became more aware of how choices impact our operations and our constituents. This came about from the lessons learnt and the eye-opening sessions from the sustainability programme we partook in. Ever since our organisation's participation in the programme, each decision we make reflects a choice on how to interpret the knowledge gained and make it relevant to our day-to-day operations. Support received from WACSI also enabled us to identify our strengths,



weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It also enabled us to envision our organisation differently and from a more progressive stance. Currently, we envision “a strategic, self-sustaining organisation capable of providing services for its constituents”.

iii. The results

Through the sustainability fellowship, we currently have:

- Updated operational manuals.
- A sustainability plan which is being operationalised.
- Prepared strategic plan for 2020-2025 and operational plan for 2020. This plan makes provision for staff training, capacity building for the board, investment in institutional capacity and infrastructure which were conspicuously absent in the past. This will enable us to become a strategic, self-sustaining organisation.
- Upgraded from the hard copy financial management system to a computerised system with the installation and usage of QuickBooks with funding from STAR Ghana Foundation.

With respect to a social enterprise venture which was highly recommended during the programme, we are now a registered agent of Fidelity Bank at Nsawam, Eastern Region. Additionally, processes are on-going for our ‘susu’¹⁰ business to be rolled out in the month of March 2020. The susu is expected to generate a minimum annual

¹⁰ Susu is a community-based savings and loan scheme.

income of GHs 24,000 in the first year. Progress has been made to operationalise ARK Impact Export and Import for the export and import of non-traditional farm produce.

Furthermore, the construction of our office complex which started in February 2019 is currently on-going (30% complete); all in a bid to invest in institutional infrastructure. This need to fast-track the completion of the office complex came only after the sustainability programme organised by WACSI. In the not so distant future, we have plans to operate a ‘pure water’ business and a school which are key income generating activities within our sustainability strategy.

In conclusion, the WACSI sustainability programme with support from STAR Ghana Foundation sparked hope into our organisation and we know though we have started flying, our wings will surely get stronger.

4.3 The Presbyterian Primary Health Care (PPHC) by Prince Abugri

“To be financially sustainable, we will have to define for ourselves a sustainability vision with strategies to achieve this vision” - Prince Abugri

i. Before the sustainability fellowship The Presbyterian Primary Health Care (PPHC) in Bolgatanga is a health provider with a focus on primary health care in rural communities to meet the needs of the vulnerable in society. Because of many economic and social events that have unfolded over the past few decades in the aid architecture, many CSOs including the Presbyterian Primary Health Care are under immense pressure to operate, survive and thrive in an increasingly competitive sector. As a result, the Presbyterian Primary Health Care has lost most of its partners and solely depends on financial claims from the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) for its survival.

Even though the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) is a good programme that has helped to increase PPHC’s reach or coverage areas, the late payment of financial claims from the NHIA remains a challenge our organisation is facing. Under the NHIS, health facilities provide the service free of charge to clients and are later reimbursed by the government through the insurance authority. However, over the years, claims re-payment has usually delayed and this negatively affects the operations and threatens the survival of the organisation.



Finding solutions to survive beyond what is from the government through the NHIA necessitated the Presbyterian Primary Health Care into joining the sustainability programme organised by WACSI and STAR Ghana Foundation.

ii. During the change process

The Presbyterian Primary Health Care has been part of the sustainability process right from the inception in Northern Ghana when the first convening was organised in Tamale. At that meeting, participants were painted the picture of CSO's sustainability in Ghana. Many could relate to the situation of sustainability on the ground. As a result, PPHC chose to be part of a formal process (training) that would help CSOs in Ghana develop their own plans to be sustainable and survive in this challenging environment. After the organisation's participation in the sustainability training, staff developed a sustainability plan for PPHC. The plan was accepted and adopted by management in October 2019.

The sustainability fellowship, in which PPHC was privileged to part of, was comprehensive, intensive, and impactful and the organisation is beginning to enjoy adequate success. The most significant change for the organisation is the realisation that to be financially sustainable, there is a need for a clearly defined sustainability vision with strategies to achieve this vision.

The main challenge that was encountered throughout the process was rallying all staff members to comprehend and participate effectively in the consultative processes leading to the development of the organisational sustainability plan. Some proposed interventions may have to go through management to the board for approval and this takes time which may result in delays in executing the said task.

iii. The results

Being part of the sustainability fellowship has broadened our understanding of organisational sustainability. We now have a holistic understanding that organisational sustainability which includes identity, operations, interventions, and financial sustainability; and a commitment to improve upon the first three will certainly lead to financial sustainability. PPHC's efforts to implement actions within the sustainability strategy over the past year have led to the following gains:

- A well-established sustainability vision for the organisation which has been communicated to all staff and the board;
- A comprehensive sustainability plan developed and discussed with management;
- The establishment of a procurement committee which has improved the availability and accessibility of medical supplies;
- Improvements in financial management and claim processing for NHIS as a result of procurement of information and communication technology equipment which has led to more than 30% increase in revenue;
- Structural expansion in two health facilities to ensure they are upgraded to a higher status of health care provider.



4.4 Sustainable Mission Aid (SMAid) International by Josue Tchimou

"SMAid's identity, operational and interventions have been strengthened, especially our visibility and strategic communications."

i. Before the sustainability fellowship

Sustainable Mission Aid (SMAid) International (formerly Map International Ghana) is a Christian health, relief and development organisation based in Ghana since 2008. SMAid was entirely sponsored by Map International USA from operations, field activities to staff salaries until September 2017. After the transition from an International organisation to a local entity from October 2017, SMAid continued its operations in Ghana but was battling financially to run the organisation because of lack of sufficient funds. SMAid had the privilege to be selected by WACSI for some workshops on CSO's Sustainability in Ghana. The Executive Director attended different workshops organised by WACSI and learned how to practically sustain an organisation.

ii. During the change process

The process that helped SMAid improve its sustainability operations in Ghana:

1. Information and strategies learnt during the different workshops were disseminated to the SMAid's team. The Management team started implementing those strategies, especially the ones in the National Sustainability Strategy.
2. Registration of SMAid International on the [West Africa Civil Society e-Directory](#) to be connected to other CSOs.

3. Development of an action plan for sustainability to serve as a road map.

After a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) and PEST (Political, Economic, Social and Technological) analysis from leadership, management team and staff, we have been able to analyse our operating environment and identified successes and challenges we need to address. These have been compiled in a document named: SMAid Strategic Sustainability Plan (SSSP).

iii. The results

As a result of SMAid's participation in the sustainability programme, the following are some of the key realisations that SMAid has been able to achieve after the National Sustainability Fellowship with the support and mentoring of WACSI:

- Staff are motivated to push SMAid Sustainability plan: Some staff members had started to lose confidence in the organisation however, sharing the knowledge received from the training with them built their trust and this helped the organisation maintain its staff.
- Reorganisation of the Board of Directors (BoD): An election was organised that led to the election of a new board of trustees with different expertise.
- Active Board of Directors meetings: Board of Directors are holding regular meetings and have put in place statues to guide them. To enforce this, stringent disciplinary measures have been put in place for any BoD members that misses a meeting.
- Organisational chart reviewed: We have reviewed the organisation's organogram to suit the new challenges ahead.

- SMAid identity, operational and interventions strengthened, most especially its visibility and internal / external communications.
- New department created on Communications and Business Development/Strategy.
- Registration of SMAid International Academy in Sunyani / Ghana (a Centre of Languages, IT and Adult Education) that will start operating in 2020. It will help sustain the non-profit activities.
- Planning to open a Community Hospital in Sunyani / Ghana in 2020 (SMAid Total Health Centre). The registration is ongoing.
- New Office open in Cote d'Ivoire: SMAid International Cote d'Ivoire to expand its operations in the region.
- Income generating activities: We are putting in place a pig farm and a poultry farm in Sunyani and Accra to sustain our interventions.

4.5 Daasgift's Quality Foundation's Experience by Mrs. Gifty Baaba Asmah

"Daasgift's participation in this sustainability programme was indispensable in the sense that it has contributed to make the institution robust, more attractive to the donor community and sustained our operations in the development sector."

i. Before the sustainability fellowship

Daasgift Quality Foundation is a wholly Ghanaian-owned financial non-governmental organisation (FNGO) founded in 2006 by Mrs. Gifty Baaba Asmah with microfinance as its core service. Daasgift seeks to empower the poor and needy, especially women and youth through the facilitation and provision of financial services such as micro-credit and non-financial support relating to business development training, youth career awareness programmes and employable skills training. The organisation participated in two (2) sustainability workshops held from 13-15 May 2019 and also from 9 to 11 October 2019 in Kumasi and Accra respectively organised by WACSI.

Prior to the participation in the sustainability workshops, the situation the organisation found itself in was not a palatable one. This is because staff did not have a full scope of knowledge about the four (4) sustainability dimensions which are financial, operational, identity and intervention. Daasgift's participation in this sustainability programme was indispensable in the sense that it has contributed to making the institution robust, more attractive to the donor community and sustained our operations in the development sector. Below are the unique challenges Daasgift faced based on the respective dimensions of sustainability prior to its participation in the programme:

Financial sustainability: Daasgift has largely depended on funded programmes and has been poor at long-term financial planning.

Operational sustainability: Daasgift found its operating space to be sustainably challenging because of its inability to generate enough resources to maintain physical offices, meet general office running cost in the next five to ten years and its inability to maintain well-trained human resources in the next five to twenty years. Daasgift's ability to maintain well-trained human resources, who have competencies, skills and knowledge required in several aspects of the organisation including fundraising, policy influencing, constituency, recognition and support, legitimacy and partnership formation has also been sustainably challenging.

Interventions sustainability: Regarding results communication, Daasgift found the aspect of sending publications to stakeholders on regular basis to be unsustainable because of insufficient resources. However, monthly reports to funders, publishing and publicising results on our website was found to be satisfactorily sustainable.

ii. During the change process

For the financial sustainability, the organisation obtained approval from the regulatory institution to inject some internally generated funds into the microfinance to build up the capital base of meeting the minimum capital requirement. Concerning leadership and governance, the organisation sought clarification from the regulatory institution as to the best way it can regularise the membership of the board members due to the very stringent nature of the application process. The regulatory institution provided information to that effect and today, the organisation has been able to attain the minimum number required.



The processes that were used to achieve these involved holding various staff and management meeting to inform them of what were learnt to make improvements in the areas that demanded redress in order of priorities. Regarding the capital injection, a formal request was made to Bank of Ghana (BoG), the regulatory authority to approve the initiative, which the regulatory authority duly did. In relation with the Board membership regularisation, the relevant processes required in the application were carried out and submitted to the regulatory authority (BoG) and was duly approved.

On fundraising, the relevance of the sustainability workshops and the results of the survey on our organisational sustainability were communicated to the finance subcommittee of the Board as well as the organisation's Executive Director, who had then travelled to the US on a business trip. The Executive Director's decision to initiate fundraising in the US, was fully endorsed by the Board.

iii. The results

The most significant change Daasgift has realised by virtue of its participation in the sustainability workshop is in the areas of financial sustainability and operational sustainability.

With respect to financial sustainability, Daasgift revamped its microfinance operations to exploit its maximum potential since that was at the centre of its core services. Results that have been gained so far are the successes chalked in injecting capital into the microfinance to expand the existing portfolio.

Also, with regards to fundraising, a payment link has been incorporated into the website of the organisation for which some funds have started flowing in.

The other area is the strengthening of its corporate governance structure. The Board now has a full complement of a minimum of five (5) Board members to carry out business to meet the regulatory requirement.

4.6 Street Children Project (SCP), Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi by Rev. Sr. Olivia Umoh

"SCP saved some money because of our newly developed finance and procurement policy. By implementing the finance and procurement policies, SCP saved 16.5% of the total cost of purchases for the last six months of the year July to December 2019."



i. Before the sustainability fellowship

With government's ongoing campaign of **"Ghana Beyond Aid"**, there is a retrogressive response by foreign donors towards funding proposals from CSOs in Ghana. SCP has experienced this situation. In November 2019, a foreign donor organisation who approached SCP to submit a proposal to them, turned down our application because Ghana has attained a human development index (HDI) that warrants that it should be more financially autonomous.

"We have received the provisional resolution of the project and it has been denied. The Cartagena City Council considers that Ghana has an average HDI according to UNDP 2018...", an excerpt from the denial letter reads.

It therefore became evident to SCP that foreign donors will one day withdraw their support to CSOs in the region. Therefore, it is imperative for CSOs in Ghana to work towards their sustainability; identify alternative funding sources that will enable the continuous provision of credible interventions that our organisations were created to offer to Ghanaian communities and citizens.

As one of its core mandates, the management of SCP has tried different avenues to incorporate self-financing mechanisms within its projects. The organisation is also realising an appreciable percentage of internally generated funds to ensure the survival of the organisation. Social enterprise initiatives have been created to ensure that such projects continue to stay relevant and add up to the number of projects being executed by the organisation. However, over the years, revenue from these social enterprises have not made remarkable economic impact



on the organisation. Although, SCP raises reasonable external funds to support its projects, policies guiding the disbursement of funds and the preparation of budgets were not readily available.

Moreover, emphasis on promoting and enhancing the organisation's identity was not a top priority of SCP's management. A limited number of interventions were executed to enhance the organisation's identity or visibility.

ii. During the change process

Street Children Project-Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi had the privilege to participate in all three sustainability workshops organised by WACSI. These trainings revealed the organisation's shortfalls in relation to the four dimensions of sustainability namely, identity, intervention, operation and financial. For us to get results, we needed to:

1. Put in place and strengthened management systems in the organisation. These include;

- Sustainability plan,
- Finance policy,
- Procurement Policy,
- Staff policy and rehabilitation protocol.

2. Increase visibility

- Produce banners and posters for events;
- Invite the press to all our events;
- Post events/interventions on WACSI e-directory regularly;
- Speak about our organisation and its services at every public outing;
- Put notices around our premises to raise awareness on our existence, operations, and services.

iii. The results

Identity sustainability

- SCP has reviewed its child protection policy to align with the current laws.
- Our work environments are more visible and attract parents who can pay to patronise our day-care facility.
- The management team members have developed a "sustainability mindset". We are working on getting all our staff and volunteers develop this mindset as well. We believe this will positively influence our approach in the management of resources with a strong bearing on the future of our organisation.

Operational Sustainability

- SCP strengthened the management structures guiding the execution of activities in the organisation.
- Most of SCP's staff are gradually imbibing and taking full ownership of SCP's vision and mission.
- Intervention Sustainability
- To make our interventions more standardised, SCP has also created a rehabilitation protocol that guides how beneficiaries and clients are supported. The protocol has helped staff to be systematic, efficient and effective in providing rehabilitation support to clients.
- More stakeholders now know about the work we do. SCP is receiving more visitors from its immediate environment making enquiries about our services.

Financial Sustainability

- The organisation has developed a financial policy and a procurement policy that informs the disbursement of funds and the purchase of items.
- SCP saved some money because of our newly developed finance and procurement policy. By implementing the finance and procurement policies, SCP saved 16.5% of the total cost of purchases for the last six months of the year July to December 2019.
- The Alternative Funding Models Guidebook has also drawn management's attention to the available internal opportunities and management is working tirelessly to capitalise and expand the internal revenue generation for the organisation.
- SCP has received some donations from local donors.



4.7 Abundant Grace Female Foundation by Commey Grace

"We began to see our sustainability to be more than our survivability."

i. Before the sustainability fellowship

Abundant Grace Female Foundation (AGFF) has been relying largely on donations from individuals and board members for project implementation. On the average, the yearly donations amount to GHC 6800. AGFF was also faced with the challenge of applying for donor funding as peer organisations who had experience in receiving donor funding over years were no longer getting the donor funds as usual.

ii. During the change process

Even though we saw our sustainability as a goal, we acknowledged the fact that it was a process. From then, we always strived to see our sustainability as a cherished dream that must be continuously nurtured. We began to see our sustainability to be more than our survivability. We also began to see our sustainability to be something that goes beyond the availability of funds. We started to nurture our sustainability from the four dimensions: identity, operational, financial and in relation to interventions.

iii. The results

We adopted different strategies under these four dimensions of sustainability, and we implemented some as explained below.

1. Interventions sustainability

To start with our sustainability journey, we organised a general meeting for board members. The aim for the meeting was to assess current needs of our stakeholders and plan for the next five years, that is from 2020 to 2024. The board reflected on immediate priorities and agreed on future directions for the repositioning of AGFF.

Also, we decided to leverage on International Day celebrations and holidays to engage and celebrate our stakeholders. For example, we used the International Day for Rural Women to organise special activities for our stakeholders. This has contributed to boost the sustainability of our interventions since we were able to increase advocacy engagement for our target groups and empower them. Over the years, AGFF has also welcomed new partnerships:

- AGFF and WACSI: WACSI played a major role in capacity building for AGFF and other CSOs in Ghana. They have also played a supervisory role in our sustainability journey.
- AGFF and Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG): AGFF worked in partnership with IDEG to educate communities on governance issues.

2. Operational sustainability

With support from WACSI, AGFF developed a sustainability plan. After that, we oriented our staff members, management, and stakeholders to be familiar with the newly developed sustainability plan. We also reshuffled the board and brought on board people with different expertise, skills and experience. We developed an employee succession plan and handbook to guide staff and management in their conducts. We agreed to review our policy framework and organisational profile every five years to ensure that we always address current needs of the communities we serve. As part of the policy, we are obliged to communicate the revisions to our stakeholders through newsletters and social media. We are planning to embark on medium term yearly strategic planning meeting to develop quarterly strategic action plans to ensure all our activities match with our yearly strategic plan.



3. Identity Sustainability

To further enhance our visibility, management of AGFF reviewed our communication materials and our logo to make them more appealing and attractive. We also developed a communication plan that would guide us in communicating appropriately with stakeholders. AGFF has started utilising opportunities presented by social media to keep the public informed about AGFF's efforts in empowering women and children, our contribution to community development and good governance.

4. Financial Sustainability

In 2014, AGFF set up a social enterprise that provides recruitment services for organisations and institutions at a fee. This enabled AGFF to generate funds to implement its non-profit and community projects. But after attending the workshops organised by WACSI, during the latter part in 2019, we strengthened the operations and capacity of the social enterprise and we believe that by the end of 2021, this social enterprise would support about thirty percent of our yearly budget.

We have also adopted yearly income and expenditure budgets. We now have better financial and administrative manuals in place, and we embarked on annual internal and external auditing. AGFF has grown and has gone a long way in its sustainability journey. We have put enough strategies in place to ensure our sustainability and this had laid a strong foundation for a brighter future.

5. Conclusion

During these increasingly volatile, uncertain, and complex times, CSOs in Ghana which are best positioned to serve their communities, are facing a limited supply of local financial resources and a shrinking of foreign funding. More than ever, they would have to radically restructure by being more mission-driven, streamline their internal operations, strengthen their internal governance, accountability systems and improve transparency. This will demand new organisational agility, imaginative and innovative leadership and building strong functional partnerships. Exploring alternative, diverse and unrestricted new income streams is no longer an option but a necessity.

As developed in this paper, a series of capacity building initiatives spearheaded by WACSI with support from STAR Ghana, have been instrumental in the process of strengthening the understanding of local CSOs on practices that will make them more sustainable, impactful, efficient and relevant. However, it is worth reiterating that sustainability is a journey, not an end in itself. Hence, Ghanaian CSOs should continue developing strong corporate governance, accountable, transparent management, and effective delivery to gain more public legitimacy and credibility.

There are several potential sources of funding that have been underdeveloped and untapped in Ghana, such as funding from the middle class, high net worth Ghanaians, religious institutions (churches, mosques, etc.) and young professionals.

Additionally, technology adoption and use are another obstacles that need to be further explored for CSOs in Ghana to effectively become sustainable. To truly identify practical alternatives, a wealth of unlearning and forgetting of the existing, often institutionalised, ways of doing things is needed. Such learning requires reflection and changes not only in individual and organisational action, but also in institutional norms and practices.

6. Recommendations for CSOs and Development Stakeholders

"The problem is in the doing. Now that we know, what shall we do?" - Wedad Sayibu (RAINS)

The convenings and the fellowship created a platform for participants to agree that CSOs need to have the following in place for local civil society to be more sustainable:

- Plan for sustainability as a core strategic objective.
- Promote networking and collaboration among CSOs.
- Reorient staff and board members' mindset about sustainability.
- Develop capacity of staff/members (new/different skills and competencies).
- Cultivate a culture of innovation that promotes adaptation and experimentation.
- Set up robust and agile internal accountability and transparency structure and systems.
- Create an enabling legal, governance and institutional framework for civil society to thrive.
- Develop alternative funding streams and understand the diversity and scale of private and domestic philanthropy.

In general, all development partners, CSOs, governments, beneficiaries and host communities, have a role to play in ensuring the viability of the civil society sector in Ghana. Furthermore, interactions with CSOs and perspectives gathered from CSOs culminated in the following recommendations which are categorised as internal (to CSOs) and external (other stakeholders that work closely with CSOs).

1. Internal recommendations

The key phrase for civil society is "change or die". In a rapidly changing external environment, there is the urgent need for organisations that want to thrive to change and adapt quickly. To do this effectively, CSOs are the primary agent of change and should consider putting in place the following recommendations based on the specific dimensions of sustainability.

i. On operational sustainability

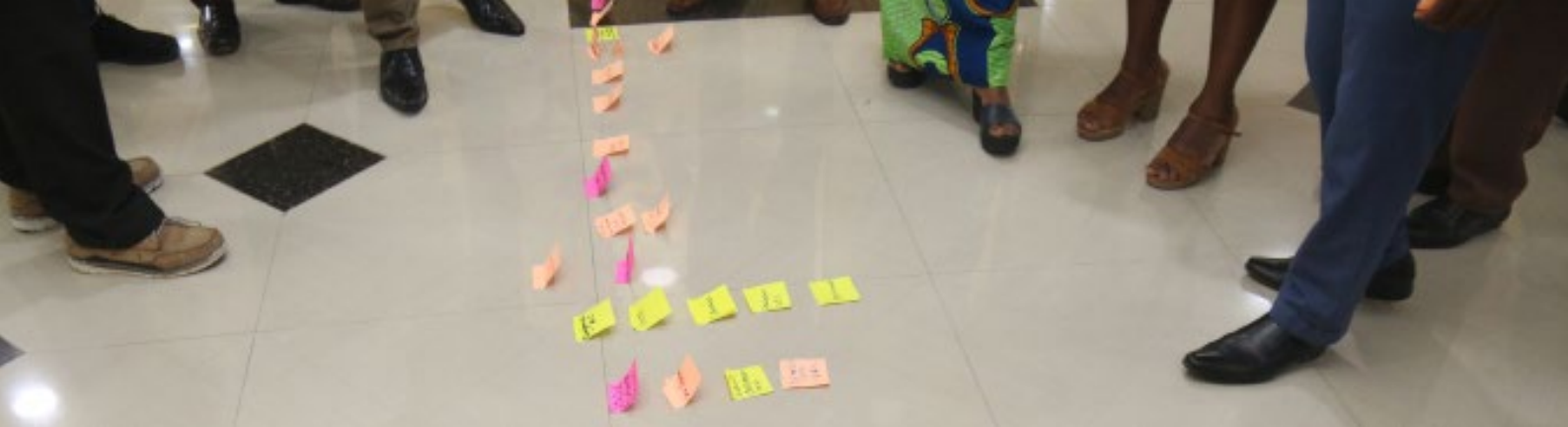
• **Specialisation:** There is the need for CSOs to specialise based on their key strengths, competence, or areas of expertise. This will ensure that government, development partners and even other CSOs will look for and secure the services of such CSOs based on the core area of competence demonstrated by the CSOs.

• **Diversification of resources:** CSOs must be creative and innovative in their response to the changing funding context. They should develop alternative funding streams such as cause-related marketing campaigns or social enterprises¹¹ that can keep them operational in the absence of donor funding. WACSI has developed an eLearning course¹² on Alternative Funding Models that CSOs can use to diversify their funding streams. In this regard, the Presbyterian Primary Health Care (PPHC) recommended CSOs to "read the research reports on sustainability: 'The state of Civil Society Organisations' Sustainability in Ghana' and the 'Guidebook on Alternative Funding Models for CSOs'. As supported by Richmond Agbanyaklu, Executive Director of Evangor Foundation:

"The highpoint for the [sustainability] fellowship for me was the issue of the guidebook on Alternative Funding Models (AFM). This guidebook is very informative and indeed an eye-opener and is a must read for every organisation irrespective of the level of the organisation. This book catalogues unconventional ways and means of finding resources to run organisations and programmes. I believe every organisation will find one of the modules that they can use and operate with. Regardless of the capacity of an organisation there will be one of the models that will come naturally for them to use. After a thorough read of the guidebook, Evangor Foundation settled on "fundraising" as one of the tools to apply. We settled on this model considering several factors such as the location of our organisation, the capacity we have at present and what we can do with that and our organisations of interest. Our objective for fundraising is to raise funds for the refurbishment of the Effia Nkwanta male recovery ward."

¹¹ These social enterprises could be in areas where public services are not working, for example, community-driven water sanitation, car rentals, renewable energy and education provisions, or agricultural production. CSOs can then push for the products and services of these social enterprises to be inserted into the supply chains of big business, whether state, local, private or foreign ones.

¹² <https://wacsi.moodlecloud.com/login/index.php>



- **Cost sharing:** CSOs could also co-locate and share office expenses so it reduces the burden on each one or share the costs of hiring certain professionals such as accountants, auditors or M&E experts.

ii. On financial sustainability

- Organisations need to have a change of mindset from donor-driven to domestic resource mobilisation.
- Relationship building is indispensable in any effort to gather the financial (and non- financial) resources (from domestic or foreign donors) to become financially self-sufficient. This approach was confirmed by Haruna Yoda, Project Manager at Centre for Community Livelihood Development (CCLD). “We worked with a partner and when the project ended, we continued to update the partner on our work. When the partner got a new project several months later, they contacted us to collaborate on a 3-year project”, he affirmed.
- Understand the diversity and scale of private philanthropy. CSOs need to understand the diversity and scale of private philanthropy and seriously engage with that sector to maximise the depth of opportunities within the sector.
- CSOs need to understand and engage with foundations – particularly the new breed of major private donors that have emerged over the last twenty years who give considerable funds to development projects and NGOs. There are foundations such as Zoomlion Foundation, Tobinco Foundation, Ntiemoah Foundation, Osei Kusi Foundation, Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) Foundation, MTN Foundation, Asamoah Gyam Foundation and others. There are also the foreign ones such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, MasterCard Foundation, Tony Elumelu Foundation, among others. This is a considerable resource that CSOs can tap into.

iii. On identity sustainability

- Make sure governing structures are in place. CSOs should establish civil society advisory committees in

their operational areas, with representatives from key stakeholders and ensure their involvement in strategy making, project design and selection, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

- STAR Ghana Foundation should facilitate and support the establishment of a National Council of CSOs (NaCCSOs) as a self-regulating body. This was the model tried in the past by the Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organisations (GAPVOD) with regional branches such as the BANGOS (Brong Ahafo NGOs) and WERENGOS (Western Region NGOs) and ASHANGOS (Ashanti Region NGOs). From the national convenings, it was agreed that there is currently a leadership vacuum within the civil society sector in Ghana and a structure such as proposed above is urgently needed to fill the vacuum.
- This will be akin to the Chartered Institute of Marketing or the Institute of Chartered Accountants. The current thematic national coalitions, networks and alliances such as the Coalition of NGOs in Health, Ghana Education Campaign Coalition, Coalition of NGOs in WASH, Child Rights Network, Ghana SDGs platform and the Ghana SRHR Alliance could form the nucleus member bodies of such a national body. The national council will then be replicated at the regional and district levels as Regional Council of CSOs (ReCCSOs) and District Council of CSOs (DiCCSOs). A strong lobby with the Department of Social Welfare and District Assemblies would ensure that it will be operationally difficult to operate in any district without DiCCSOs clearance.
- Visibility: CSOs that work assiduously but fail to effectively communicate, may be living to die. Hence, it is imperative for CSOs to work assiduously and strategically to improve on their visibility. They can make use of platforms such as the West Africa Civil Society E-Directory (www.csowestafrica.org) to raise the visibility of their organisations.

iv. On intervention sustainability

- There is a need for networking and collaboration among CSOs. This will help CSOs to leverage on each other's strengths and competencies and contribute to their overall efficiency. For example, CSOs could collaborate and partner on a given project by sharing the key tasks – project proposal and design, community entry, project management, community activations, project communications, accounting and finance, auditing, project reporting, etc. They could also form a consortium in which specific organisations within the consortium leverage on their core competencies to work on specific programme areas as defined by the consortium's workplan.
- Increased accountability with beneficiaries and stakeholders. As a participant from the Fellowship on CSOs sustainability puts it: "CSOs should always remember to let their beneficiaries own the projects they embark on." In doing so, CSOs will encourage a sense of ownership of projects they are implementing by beneficiaries and this can contribute to the sustainability of the project.

2. External recommendations

i. The government, its ministries, departments and agencies must create an enabling environment for civil society sustainability in Ghana.

There is the urgent need for a more efficient civil society regulation in Ghana. An NGO Bill is being developed but expedited action is needed to pass the law before the upcoming electoral campaign in December 2020. Kenya's Public Benefit Organisations Act offers some lessons for Ghana. The Act recognises the role of civil society in supporting socio-economic development, building social cohesion, and promoting democracy. Such legal provisions must be understood and pursued as an invitation to engage with government to enhance spaces for active citizenship and civic engagement. If an adequate NGO Bill is passed, it would normally require the government to:

- Give due consideration to CSOs' activities and involve them in national development plans. As rightly indicated by PPHC, "government should collaborate and see CSOs as agents of change and development who should be supported. The government should therefore resource, make visible and active intensive efforts to support CSOs' work in the country."

- Waive taxes on equipment and project vehicles of CSOs.
- Set-up a CSO endowment fund to support CSOs activities.
- Establish a national policy with guidelines on social enterprises.¹³

ii. Donors are encouraged to redefine funding practices and policies by providing long term, flexible and core funding.

Major development partners are pulling out of Ghana or scaling down their operations. The ongoing support programmes must adapt funding policies and practices by providing long-term, flexible and core funding that will help CSOs to plan multi-year programmes, retain staff and adapt programming to address changes in or interruptions to funding streams.

iii. International NGOs should sufficiently support management fees and sustainability grants when working with local CSOs and whenever possible, work directly with grassroots organisations. They should ensure that the local CSOs they are collaborating with build sustainability into their projects right from project conception stage and monitored throughout the project life cycle. They should work in partnership with advisors that have experience working with existing and vibrant CSOs.

iv. Capacity building organisations and universities in all 10 regional capitals: The Presbyterian Primary Health Care (PPHC) indicated that STAR Ghana Foundation and other donor organisations should continue to invest in building capacities of CSOs to make them more sustainable. In this regard, WACSI could run a sandwich certificate programme in NGO development. This could be a 4-week residential programme run during the holidays for CSO leaders and staff in the full technical suite of founding, establishing and successfully running a viable and sustainable CSO. In Nigeria, the Lagos Business School (LBS) is developing something similar christened the Nonprofit Management Programme for Senior Executives (NPMfEx).

- Other development partners are also encouraged to:
- Support in capacity building to sustain local CSOs.
- Support other less endowed CSOs to also "grow".

¹³ British Council (2018). *Social Enterprise Landscape in Ghana*.



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Section of Plan	Rationale
Introduction	
Preamble	
Background	
Executive summary	
Situation analysis	
Goal	
Objective	
Specific objectives	
Stakeholders	
Sources of funds	
Approach	
Strategies	
Methods	
models	
Activities	
Actions	
Timeline	
Staffing requirement	
Budget	
Cash flow statement	

Table 1: Framework for a financial sustainability plan

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